Chapter 7

American Military History: The Early Period, 1607–1815

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THIS chapter and the two that follow deal with individual periods of American military history to the end of World War II. As an introduction the student needs to know something of the writings on the whole course of that history and of the principal themes and controversies that historians and writers have developed in dealing with it. These topics can be dealt with only briefly.

To the earliest American historians, military history was not considered a field separate from that of the general history of the United States. George Bancroft, the most noted of the nineteenth-century group, contributed a great deal to the military as well as political history of America. And if his simplistic belief in the story of America as the triumph of liberty under divine guidance no longer appeals to the critical mind of the twentieth century, Bancroft still left an important legacy to historians of all phases of American life, including the military. His successors in writing general histories of the United States—men like Justin Winsor, John B. McMaster, Richard Hildreth, and Edward Channing—likewise did not neglect military history. The general run of analytical and "scientific" historians of the early twentieth century, however, shifted the focus away from military events and institutions to the social and economic structure beneath political development. Academic historians of the 1920s and 1930s were apt to stress the causes and consequences of war to the exclusion of either the course of American wars or military institutions as a part of American life. Only after World War II was the balance in some measure redressed.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, then, military history became to some extent divorced from general American

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history and became the province of military professionals and gifted amateur historians with military interests; only a few of the new "scientific" historians made contributions. The pioneer in the field of military policy was a Regular Army officer and Civil War veteran with a confirmed faith in the superiority of the military professional over the citizen soldier. Emory Upton's *Military Policy of the United States*, published posthumously by the War Department at the instigation of Secretary Elihu Root in 1904, exerted a powerful influence for decades on both Army officers and military historians. Upton's thesis was that the United States, because of lack of appreciation of the value of trained military professionals, had blundered unprepared into its wars at a scandalous cost in time, human life, and natural resources. Upton was contemptuous of hastily trained citizen soldiers and politicians in Congress and the Presidency whom he held responsible for the nation's inept military policies. Upton's account stopped at the end of the Civil War. Frederic L. Huidekoper's *Military Unpreparedness of the United States* (1915), relying on Upton for the earlier years, covered the period through the Spanish-American War in essentially Uptonian fashion. C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon in *American Military Policy: Its Development Since 1775* (1955) have brought Upton's thesis past the Second World War. The first comprehensive histories of the United States Army that appeared between World War I and World War II, William A. Ganoe's *History of the United States Army* (1924) and Oliver L. Spaulding's *The United States Army in War and Peace* (1937), both written by Army officers and still very useful, show strong Uptonian influence.

The Uptonians did not have the field all to themselves. John A. Logan, one of those "political" generals of the Civil War, in 1887 published *The Volunteer Soldier of America*, a massive and ill-organized tome but one that used American military history to argue the superiority of the citizen soldier over the professional. A more up-to-date statement of Logan's thesis is to be found in Jim Dan Hill's *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard* (1964). The most balanced and effective counterargument to Upton came from a fellow professional and distinguished military scholar, John McAuley Palmer, and was presented in its most comprehensive form in *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization* (1941). Using the same historical examples as Upton, Palmer argued that the great defect in American policy had not been the use of citizen soldiers but the failure to

train them well in an organized reserve. Palmer cited Washington's support of a "well regulated militia" after the Revolution in support of his contention much as Upton had used Washington's tirades against ill-trained militia in the Revolution to make his case for the professionals.

The contrasting Upton and Palmer theses have provided much of the central theme for the history of the United States Army, its wars and battles. Since World War II the whole controversy has been placed within a broader context. Walter Millis's *Arms and Men* (1956) is an excellent and readable account of the development of American military policy within the broader context of technological change and political shifts in the world around us. Millis adds a naval dimension to the story of the development of American military policy and ends with a discussion of the dilemma that the development of air power and of atomic weapons has brought about, suggesting that under modern conditions war can no longer serve any useful purpose. Russell Weigley in two books, *Towards an American Army* (1962) and *History of the United States Army* (1967), deals with the development of the Army as an institution, candidly recognizing that he is writing the history of two armies, one the professional and the other the citizens' reserve, and that the tension between them is well illustrated by the writings of Upton and his critics. Unlike his predecessors, Ganoe and Spaulding, Weigley deals little with military operations. A recent amalgam of both institutional history of the Army and its role in battles and wars is to be found in Maurice Matloff's (ed.) *American Military History* (1969, revised 1973) produced by the U.S. Army Center of Military History primarily as an ROTC text. In a third work, *The American Way of War* (1973), Weigley traces the development of American strategy beginning with the American Revolution and concludes, much like Millis, that the traditional American concept of war has been outdated by post-World War II developments. T. Harry Williams's *Americans at War* (1956) is a very readable treatise on military organization and policy, although weak on developments in the twentieth century. Two useful books on the development of American military policy and thought are Millis's (ed.) *American Military Thought* (1966) and Raymond O'Connor's (ed.) *American Defense Policy in Perspective* (1965).

The U.S. Navy theorists, sparked by Alfred Thayer Mahan's writings, have generally dealt with broader themes of world naval history rather than confining themselves strictly to

American military developments. There are, however, numerous useful histories of the U.S. Navy; the earliest, by novelist James Fenimore Cooper, appeared in 1854. In 1893 Edgar S. Maclay published a two-volume *History of the Navy*, expanded into three volumes after the Spanish-American War. Like many of its successors, it is in the heroic tradition. Dudley Knox's *History of the United States Navy*, first published in 1936 with an updated and enlarged edition in 1948, is better balanced, as is the work of Naval Academy teachers Carroll S. Alden and Allen Westcott, *The United States Navy: A History* (1943). The best scholarly work on the history of the United States Navy to the end of World War I is Harold and Margaret Sprout's *The Rise of American Naval Power* (1939), a work that puts Mahan in proper context as Millis and Weigley put Upton in context. E.B. Potter's (ed.) *The United States and World Sea Power* (1955) follows the Mahan tradition of treating U.S. naval history within the framework of the long story of developments in sea warfare.

There are a number of general histories of the Marine Corps, the most notable, all written by Marine officers, are Clyde H. Metcalfe's *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (1939), Robert D. Heinl's *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (1962), and Edwin H. Simmons's, *The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1975* (1975). The most recent and detailed Marine Corps history is J. Robert Moskin's *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (1977), essentially a combat narrative.

For general coverage of battle history, the old classic, Matthew Steele's *American Campaigns* (1909), is now largely outdated; but neither J.F.C. Fuller's *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (1942) nor Robert Leckie's *Wars of America* (1968) really supplant it. The battles of our wars can in fact be studied best in the more specialized literature. An indispensable adjunct to their study, in whatever sources, is *The West Point Atlas of American Wars* (two volumes, 1959) edited by Brig. Gen. Vincent Esposito.

Civil-military relations have attracted a great deal of attention in the post-World War II era, and both historians and political scientists have explored the historical dimensions of the problem. Louis Smith's *American Democracy and Military Power* (1951) is a solid, relatively impartial account. Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (1957) is more provocative, a study quite sympathetic to the military that stresses the need for strict military professionalism and what Huntington designates as "objective civilian control." In contrast, a strong

antimilitary bias shows in Arthur E. Ekirch's *The Civilian and the Military* (1956), a work that stresses what Ekirch considers increasing military dominance since World War II.

James A. Huston in *Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953* (1966) gives comprehensive treatment to an area of American military history long neglected. The only other work in the logistics area on a comparable scale, but more specialized, is Erna Risch's *Quartermaster Support of the Army* (1962). In the field of military education the best work is by John W. Masland and Lawrence I. Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars: Military Education and National Policy* (1957). On the oldest American military educational institution, perhaps the best recent history is Stephen Ambrose's *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (1966).

An ambitious series covering both American wars and military policy and institutions is the Macmillan Wars of the United States series under the general editorship of Louis Morton. Individual volumes from this series, all written by outstanding scholars in their respective fields, will be cited in connection with the specific periods they cover.

To turn now to the first of these periods, in the two centuries that elapsed between the first English settlements at Jamestown in 1607 and the end of the second American war with Britain in 1815, military affairs played an important part in American life and development. As colonists, Americans fought thousands of engagements with the Indians, took part in half a dozen European wars that spread to the American continent, and engaged in a certain amount of strife among themselves. As rebels they fought an eight-year war to break their bonds to the mother country. As citizens of a free and independent state, they established a framework for national military policies, pushed the Indian frontier westward, and pursued a precarious neutrality in the wars that wracked Europe between 1792 and 1815. They finally went to war with Britain for a second time in 1812, providing a test for the military institutions that had taken shape during the colonial and early national experience. The peace that ended this war also ended an epoch in American military history when the country, as colony and nation, had been inextricably embroiled in the affairs of European states; it marked the beginning of a new era, to last until 1898, during which the United States would concentrate on internal development and westward expansion across the continent.

The Colonial Experience

In 1955 Clarence C. Clendenen characterized the colonial era as "A Little Known Period of American Military History" and decried the lack of attention of military historians to this period except as "background."[1] In a comparative sense, Clendenen was right. There has been much less written on the military history of the colonial period, particularly in recent years, than on the Revolution and the subsequent development of the United States as a nation. Yet neglect is a relative matter, and there is ample historical literature on the colonial wars, both of a summary and specialist nature. The coverage of colonial military institutions is somewhat less adequate, and no single book provides a thorough summary of both colonial wars and military institutions.

The military institutions of the American colonists owed much to a European heritage that went back to Greek and Roman times; but this European heritage was modified greatly in an American wilderness where land was plentiful and labor to work it scarce and where the Indians with whom the English colonists had first to vie for control fought in a different fashion from Europeans. The essential feature of the military system of colonial America was the requirement for militia service on the part of every able-bodied male. The militia was an ancient English institution going back to the Middle Ages; by the end of the seventeenth century, however, it no longer had the same importance in England as in the colonies. In America the militia system was well adapted to the environment, for a professional army was probably not the most effective instrument for the intermittent and scattered warfare with the aborigines of North America, nor could the colonies afford one.

Some of the older works still contain the best accounts of the militia. Herbert L. Osgood's *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (three volumes, 1904–07) and *The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century* (four volumes, 1924) offer some of the best treatments of militia institutions. *Backgrounds of Selective Service*, edited by Arthur Vollmer (two volumes, Volume II in nine parts, 1947) as part of the historical effort of the Selective Service System headquarters, contains both a summary and a convenient compilation of the militia laws of all of the original thirteen colonies. More recently

1. Clarence C. Clendenen, "A Little Known Period of American History," *Military Affairs* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1955):37.

Daniel Boorstin has provided a provocative sketch of the militia and the "minuteman" tradition in Part 13 of *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (1958), dealing more in the realm of ideas than in the complications of militia practices.

A more detailed view of the colonial militia as an institution and of these practices in different colonies must be sought in institutional histories of the various individual colonies, in the literature on the colonial wars, and in a large number of articles on various aspects of the militia that have appeared in scholarly journals since World War II, of which only a few can be cited. Philip Alexander Bruce's *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (1910) contains one of the better studies of the militia in a southern colony. Louis Morton in "The Origins of American Military Policy," *Military Affairs* 22 (1958-59), deals with the early development of militia institutions in both New England and Virginia. Jack S. Radabaugh in "The Militia of Colonial Massachusetts," *Military Affairs* 18 (1954), and E. Milton Wheeler in "Development and Organization of the North Carolina Militia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (1964) treat the militia of these two colonies in some detail. Morison Sharp, in "Leadership and Democracy in the Early New England System of Defense," *American Historical Review* 50 (1945), stresses the extent to which the militia organization was an integral part of a whole social system. Benjamin Quarles in "The Colonial Militia and Negro Manpower," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1959) treats the role of blacks in the militia system.

And colonial military institutions were really not so simple as they have frequently been painted, a point effectively made by John Shy in "A New Look at the Colonial Militia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, Volume 20 (1963). Shy points out that there were great differences in military practices in the thirteen individual colonies, that the quality of militia varied from colony to colony and by regions within colonies, and finally that many of the forces employed by the colonies were not, strictly speaking, militia at all but volunteers enlisted for particular terms of service. These volunteer forces, he says, included indentured servants and drifters not enrolled in the common militia, and he speculates that the poor character of some of these volunteers had much to do with the miserable performance of some colonial units in the French and Indian War.

Shy's preliminary conclusions draw attention to the need for further investigation of the whole spectrum of colonial military practices if we are to understand fully the roots of American

military policy. The ordinary militia organization practically never took the field as a unit. It was rather a base for volunteers or draftees who were formed into special organizations for specific incidents or campaigns. Then, outside this regular organization, some militiamen formed volunteer organizations, purchased uniforms, and undertook special drills; these units would form the basis for the nineteenth-century development of the National Guard. Similarly, the volunteer units noted by Shy, with their officers appointed not elected, and their men enlisted for specific terms of service, were not militia but the predecessors of the Continental Army and the state volunteers of the Mexican and Civil wars. The last element in this picture was of course the British regular, who appeared in America only in isolated instances up to 1755 but played an important role after that date, first as defender and then as a threat to American liberties. American colonists also served, though infrequently, in the ranks of British regular units, as in the Cartegena expedition in 1741 and in the French and Indian War. The best reference on the weapons and uniforms of all these types of forces and of their enemies is Harold L. Peterson's *Arms and Armor in Colonial America, 1526-1783* (1956).

The wars and battles provincials and redcoats fought have been the subject of more historical literature than have the military institutions of the colonists. Both early wars with the Indians and internal conflicts were normally localized within individual colonies or regions, but the Indian wars eventually merged into the wars between France and England for the control of North America—King William's War (1689-97), Queen Anne's War (1701-13), King George's War (1744-48), and the French and Indian War (1754-63), to use their American nomenclature. The climax of colonial military history came in the last of these wars, known in Europe as the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and rechristened by Lawrence Gipson, historian of the old British Empire, as the Great War for Empire.

Several good modern works cover, in whole or in part, localized Indian wars of the seventeenth century. Douglas E. Leach's *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (1958) treats the major and decisive encounter of the New England colonists with the Indians of that region. Alden T. Vaughan's *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (1965) extends the coverage further back in time while Leach's The Northern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763 (1966), in a new series entitled Histories of the American Frontier, covers other matters relating to frontier life as well as Indian

fighting over a longer period. Verner W. Crane's *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1928) is an older work considered standard on the Indian wars of the Carolinas. On Indian warfare, intertribal as well as with the whites, along the lake and river chain between New York and Canada, see George T. Hunt's *The Wars of the Iroquois* (1940) and Allen W. Trelease's *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (1960). Wilcomb E. Washburn's *The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia* (1957) deals both with the problem of the Indian frontier and with internal conflict in seventeenth-century Virginia, treating the rebellion as an outgrowth of a crisis in defense policy rather than in the traditional manner as an incident in the struggle for political liberty. A good introduction to the methods of Indian warfare is John K. Mahon's "Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1958).

In covering the epic struggle between France and England for control of North America, and the Indian warfare that accompanied it, Francis Parkman was the pioneer. Although Parkman did not have access to all the sources that the present day historian has, his firsthand knowledge of the terrain and of the North American Indian have never been surpassed. He wrote with consummate literary skill and his nine-volume series on France and England in North America, published between 1865 and 1892, constitutes a stirring and dramatic account full of the personality of the leaders and the clash of arms in the wilderness. Parkman was above all a good storyteller, not an analytical historian, but his stories have formed the basis of the traditional view of the events of this long conflict.

Another military classic, Sir John Fortescue's *History of the British Army* (Volume II, 1899) covers the colonial wars in outline with the main emphasis on the French and Indian War, the only one in which sizable British Army units operated on the American mainland. A modern scholarly work on a grand scale is Lawrence H. Gipson's *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* in fifteen volumes (1936-70), which in selected portions deals with the colonial wars from the viewpoint of the British administrators in London. A compact summary, reflecting the modifications of Parkman's accounts by modern scholars, is Howard H. Peckham's *The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762* (1964), a volume in the University of Chicago's History of American Civilization series. The most recent summary work, Douglas Leach's *Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America* (1973) in the

Macmillan Wars series, treats the colonial wars in broader social context than did the earlier histories; it is in fact the nearest thing to an adequate overall treatment of both the colonial wars and military institutions, and it contains the best bibliography for those who want to investigate the colonial period in depth.

Perhaps the most noted colonial military exploit was the capture of the French fortress at Louisbourg in 1745, one of the few cases where colonial military forces successfully mounted an offensive outside their borders. G. A. Rawlyk's *Yankees at Louisbourg* (1967) has superseded earlier accounts of this expedition. In the southern colonies, the struggle was with Spain rather than France, and the thirteenth colony, Georgia, was founded primarily as a British outpost against Spain. The wars on the southern frontier have had no Parkman to recount them. Two valuable recent studies are J. Leitch Wright's *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (1971) and Larry E. Ivers's *British Drums on the Southern Frontier . . . 1733-1749* (1973).

The war waged with France from 1754 to 1763 was the climax of colonial military history. Gipson's view of the "Great War for Empire" (covered in Volumes VI-VIII of his work), as the designation implies, is that it was not a defensive but an offensive war waged by the British to expand their empire. Writing from a different vantage point, a French Canadian scholar, Guy Fregault, thoroughly agrees; in *Canada: The War of the Conquest* (1955, reprint 1969) he emphasizes the effects of the British imperial drive on the French culture of the province. The British threw their full energies into the conflict in North America and after early defeats emerged completely victorious, banishing the French threat to the British colonies forever. In this war the direction, financing, and the greater part of the military forces were furnished by the British, but all types of colonial forces described earlier participated. Many Americans, including George Washington, got the military experience that was to stand them in good stead in the American Revolution. Stanley Pargellis has written the most authoritative account of the whole range of affairs relating to the British conduct of the war in *Lord Loudoun in North America* (1933) and has provided a judicious selection of documents in *Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle* (1936). From another vantage point John A. Schutz has covered the early campaigns in the north in his biography of *William Shirley, King's Governor of Massachusetts* (1961).

Two events in the French and Indian War attract particular attention—the ambush and utter defeat of General Edward Braddock's force approaching Fort Duquesne in 1755, and the victory of General James Wolfe over the Marquis de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham before Quebec in 1759, clinching a British victory in the war. They may be used to dispel certain myths about the inability of British regulars to adapt to warfare in America. Braddock's defeat supposedly proved the unsuitability of traditional linear tactics of eighteenth-century warfare in America, yet Wolfe's climactic victory on the Plains of Abraham was gained almost exclusively by his use of these same tactics. In truth, the victory of the vastly inferior French and Indian forces over Braddock on the Monongahela was a singular event, not to be repeated in the nine years that followed. Although the British learned their lessons from it, they did not reduce their emphasis on rigid discipline or abandon regular line of battle tactics, even in the American wilderness. But they did modify these tactics under particular conditions in the American environment as described by J.F.C Fuller in *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century* (1925) and, more recently, by Eric Robson in "British Light Infantry in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Effect of American Conditions," *Army Quarterly* 63 (1952). Peter Paret argues, on the contrary, in "Colonial Military Experience and European Military Reform at the End of the Eighteenth Century," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Records* 37 (1964), that the influence of colonial experience on the tactics of European armies was slight.

In any case the traditional picture of Braddock's defeat as a result of the blunders of the British general has undergone considerable transformation at the hands of modern scholars, though few completely absolve him of blame for the debacle. But Stanley Pargellis in "Braddock's Defeat," *American Historical Review* 41 (1936) and Lee McCardell in *Ill-Starred General: Braddock of the Coldstream Guards* (1958) show him as more unlucky than inept. The role of the young George Washington in the war, including his part in Braddock's expedition, is treated realistically in Volume II of Douglas Freeman's *George Washington* (1950) and in James Flexner's *George Washington: The Forge of Experience, 1732-1775* (1965). Both volumes also treat extensively the difficulties besetting the Virginia military effort in the war, problems also covered in Louis K. Koontz's *Robert Dinwiddie* (1925), written from the viewpoint of the Virginia colonial governor. On Montcalm and Wolfe a Canadian historian, C. P. Stacey, has brought the best of modern scholarship to

bear on the events on the Plains of Abraham in his *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (1959). Stacey corrects many old myths and dispels much of the heroic aura that has always surrounded the tragic figures of Wolfe and Montcalm, showing them in all their true human dimensions—as men with many frailties playing out a great historic drama, men whom their contemporaries regarded with a certain ambivalence.

The war did not really end with the defeat of the French. The Indian tribes along the western frontier undertook a desperate effort in 1763 to salvage something of what they had lost with the defeat of their French allies, an episode to which Howard Peckham has given full treatment (revising and updating Parkman) in *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (1947). Viewing the long Anglo-French struggle in broader perspective, the decisive factor was probably not superior British land forces but the control of the seas by the British Navy. The best works on the role of the naval war are Michael Lewis's *The Navy of Britain* (1948) and Gerald Graham's *Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America* (1950).

British success in the "Great War for Empire" led directly to the American Revolution: Administering and defending the new territories produced the policy of maintaining British regulars in America and taxing the colonists to support them, a policy that found its first expression in the Stamp Act. The story of British military policy in this connection and that of the British Army that served in America and its part in provoking the conflict is well told in John Shy's *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the Revolution* (1965).

The American Revolution

The American Revolution was a great event, not only in American but in world history. It brought into being a nation that became, in less than two centuries, the most powerful in the western world. And it marked the beginnings of vast changes that would sweep that western world in the century following, thrusting aside old monarchical institutions in favor of parliamentary democracy and *laissez faire* economics. Albeit fought on the main battlefields much like other eighteenth-century wars, it also carried within it the seeds of change that would sprout and grow in the French Revolution less than two decades later. It was, in this sense, a transition between limited wars fought by professional armies and people's wars fought by the "nation in arms."

The literature on the military history of the Revolution, quite apart from that on its political, economic, and social aspects, is voluminous—the product of several generations of historians collectors, memoir writers, and journalists. Although the military history of the war has not generated so much controversy or changing interpretation as that of its causes or the extent of internal revolution, successive generations of historians have looked at it somewhat differently.[2]

The nineteenth century was a period of rampant American nationalism, and American historiography of the Revolution, seldom critical or impartial, for the most part portrayed the war in terms of the heroic deeds of Washington and his comrades in arms, enshrining them in a special pantheon of American heroes. While some writers benefited from personal knowledge of men and events, nearly all lacked written source material since collecting and printing documents was a slow process. Some of the earliest histories of the Revolution, for instance those by Rev. William Gordon (1788) and Dr. David Ramsay (1793), contained large sections copied almost verbatim from the accounts published each year during the conflict in the British *Annual Register*.

There was a good deal of originality, however, in Benson J. Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (two volumes, 1851-60), an encyclopedia-like book based on a tour of the sites of Revolutionary events which is still quite useful. Also useful is the great amount of source material collected and published by state governments, historical societies, and private individuals during the course of the nineteenth century, including many soldiers' journals, diaries, and memoirs. The biographies of the period, although generally laudatory, also included much original material. There were many good articles and monographs covering battles and campaigns, an especially significant number appearing in the course of the centennial celebration between 1875 and 1883. Some battle and campaign histories that merit particular attention are Henry P. Johnston's *Campaign of 1776 Around New York* (1878) and *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis* (1881), Lyman C. Draper's *King's Mountain and Its Heroes* (1881), Henry B. Carrington's *Battles of the American Revolution* (1876), and William S. Stryker's *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton* (1898).

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2. For an excellent essay on this topic, see Don Higginbotham, "American Historians and the Military History of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 70 (Oct. 1965):18-34.

Indeed, the nineteenth-century nationalist historians established a good factual basis for the history of battles and campaigns and for the contributions of various leaders. But they incorporated little critical analysis of the generalship on either side, of the nature of American or British military policy and strategy, or of the reasons for American victory and British defeat. The new professional "scientific" historians of the first four decades of the twentieth century, in their study of the Revolution, with some few exceptions, concentrated on economic, social, and political changes, virtually ignoring the extent to which the military course of the war affected these areas.

The military professionals or talented amateur historians who did continue to study the military aspects of the struggle adopted a critical approach quite different from that of their romantic nationalist predecessors. Emory Upton drew heavily on the Revolution to produce his examples of the inefficiency of militia. Frances Vinton Greene's *The Revolutionary War and the Military Policy of the United States* (1911), a short military history of the Revolution, was largely Uptonian in spirit. And Charles Francis Adams, a member of the famous family and a Civil War veteran, in *Studies Military and Diplomatic* (1911), established some of the principal lines the military critique of the war was to follow for some time to come. He described the battle of Bunker Hill as an epic of blunders on both sides, found Washington's conduct of the New York campaign in 1776 little short of disastrous, and charged that the American Commander-in-Chief's lack of appreciation of cavalry cost the patriots dearly. The message of the writings of Adams, Upton, Greene, and like critics was that the Americans had won more because of British blunders and French aid than because of their own wise policies or intelligent leadership. While some, like Adams, criticized Washington, most, like Upton, concentrated their fire on an inept Continental Congress. Both lines of thought found their way into the debunking biographies and popular histories of the 1920s and 1930s.

Despite slight attention in academic circles, some solid scholarly works were produced on the military side of the Revolution in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Louis C. Hatch's *Administration of the American Revolutionary Army* (1904), though unsatisfactory in many respects, is still the best work dealing with what we would today call personnel administration. Charles K. Bolton's study, *The Private Soldier under Washington* (1902), falls into a similar category. Justin Smith's two-volume work, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth*

Colony: Canada and the American Revolution (1907) is still the only full treatment of American efforts to conquer Canada. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan turned his skills to analysis of the naval operations on both sides in *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of Independence* (1913). Gardner Allen produced what is still the standard history of the Continental Navy in *Naval History of the American Revolution* (two volumes, 1913). E. E. Curtis's *Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution* (1926) was one of the first studies to call attention to the immense difficulties the British faced in raising, transporting, and supplying an army to fight the war in America.

A number of other studies of the period laid greater stress on the ineptitude of British ministers and commanders than on any inherent difficulties they faced. William M. James's *British Navy in Adversity* (1926) emphasized the incompetence of Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Hoffman Nickerson's *The Turning Point of the Revolution* (1928), a classic study of the Saratoga campaign by an Army officer, blamed much of the British failure in the 1777 campaign on the blundering of Lord George Germain. Allen French's *The Day of Lexington and Concord* (1925) and *The First Year of the American Revolution* (1934), meticulously researched accounts of the events of 1775-76, stressed the ineptitude of the king's ministers and his commanders in America in the revolutionary crisis. Troyer S. Anderson in *The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution* (1936) pictured the Howes as caught in a dilemma between their peacemaking and warmaking missions.

World War II seemingly reminded American professional historians, many of whom served in the conflict, that how wars are fought can be as important as the causes and consequences of them and indeed must in any case vitally affect the latter. The 1950s saw the appearance of a number of general histories of land warfare during the American Revolution—Willard Wallace's *Appeal to Arms* (1951); Lynn Montross's *Rag, Tag, and Bobtail: The Story of the Continental Army* (1952); Christopher Ward's *The War of the Revolution*, edited by John R. Alden (two volumes, 1952); George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin's *Rebels and Redcoats* (1957); and Howard Peckham's *The War for Independence: A Military History* (1958). A voluminous documentary collection by Henry S. Commager and Richard B. Morris, *The Spirit of '76: The Story of the American Revolution as told by Participants* (two volumes, 1958), by no means slighted the military events of the war itself.

These various general histories provide the student today with

more than adequate general coverage of the campaigns and battles of the war. Meanwhile, scholars in more specialized areas have produced a large number of new studies, and new balanced biographies have supplanted both the romanticized works of the nineteenth century and the debunking biographies of the 1920s and 1930s. The most recent general military history of the Revolution, Don Higginbotham's *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practices* (1971), contains the best synthesis of all this recent scholarship. Higginbotham adds little to Ward or Wallace insofar as the course of battles and campaigns is concerned, but he does add a dimension in treating the military policies and institutions of Revolutionary America in an attempt to show how they grew out of the colonial past and influenced the future of American military policy. In similar fashion, Mark M. Boatner's *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (1966, revised in 1974) is an indispensable reference work that incorporates, in topical entries, much of the results of scholarly study of the Revolution since Lossing's time. Also useful as reference works are two bicentennial publications sponsored by the Clements Library at the University of Michigan—Howard H. Peckham's (ed.) *The Toll of Independence: Engagements and Battle Casualties of the American Revolution* (1974) and Charles H. Lesser's (ed.) *The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army* (1976).

The picture of the Revolution that emerges from this welter of new scholarship is neither the nineteenth-century one of righteous patriots triumphing over villainous redcoats nor of an American victory explained solely in terms of British blunders and French aid. If there is any one theme running through much of the recent literature produced on both sides of the Atlantic it is the emphasis on the sheer physical difficulty the British faced in subduing the American revolt. The British had to recruit an army or buy one in Germany, transport and supply it over 3,000 miles of ocean, and then use it effectively to reestablish control over a vast and sparsely populated territory. If British generals seemed slow and lethargic and constantly worked at cross purposes with their colleagues, their naval counterparts, and the government at home, much of this was owing to the great difficulties of transport, supply, and communication over long distances.

This point of view is ably presented in the British historian Eric Robson's brilliant series of essays, *The American Revolution in Its Political and Military Aspects* (1955). Another British scholar, Piers Mackesy, has also faced the question of why the

British defeat in a study of British policy and strategy at the cabinet level in London, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (1964). Mackesy feels that a British military victory would have been possible on a number of occasions, and particularly in 1780 when war weariness had set in among the Americans, had the British been able to put about 10,000 more troops in America. Mackesy admits, however, that such a military victory would have had little political value unless the British could have found a native Tory element capable of governing the country. Mackesy finds the French and Spanish contribution in contesting control of the seas the really vital factor, a judgment not very different from that of Admiral Mahan in 1913. In contrast to Mackesy, John R. Alden in his *The American Revolution* (1954) contends that the British task was so difficult that the Americans could probably have won without French aid.

Those who, like Mackesy, believe the British might have won admit that the victory would have been possible only if they could have used the "good Americans," the Tories, to control the "bad" ones—Washington, Jefferson, and the other rebels. No question in the historiography of the Revolution is more difficult than that of the Tories. Who and how numerous were they? William H. Nelson in an excellent philosophical analysis, *The American Tory: A Study of the Loyalists in the American Revolution* (1961), argues that the Tories were usually local minorities and that they were about one quarter of the "politically active" population. Wallace Brown in *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (1969), based largely on a study of Loyalists who claimed compensation from the British after the war, places their number within the broad range of fifteen to thirty percent of the population. Paul H. Smith's *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (1964) shows how the British failed in their effort to make effective use of the Tories.

The new emphasis upon the difficulties the British faced and the importance of the Tories has forced some re-evaluation of Upton's strictures on the militia during the Revolution. For the militia, after all, maintained control of the countryside, put the Tories in their place, and harried the British armies that moved too far away from their coastal bases. Walter Millis has put it quite succinctly:

> While the regular armies marched and fought more or less ineffectually, it was the militia which presented the greatest single impediment to Britain's only practicable weapon, that of counter-revolution. The militia were often much less than ideal combat troops and they have

> come in for hard words ever since. But their true military and political significance may have been underrated.[3]

As the United States itself became involved, in Vietnam, in wrestling with a problem of control of a countryside and its population, appreciation of the difficulties the British faced in the Revolution and of the importance of the militia has increased. Yet in all the welter of scholarship on the American Revolution, no good work treats the Revolutionary militia nor indeed provides a satisfactory account of the Continental Army as a military institution, though the subjects are covered with varying accuracy in the standard military histories of the Revolution and of the United States Army.

Whatever the militia's contribution, the final victory still had to be won on the land and sea by regular American and French military forces. The detailed study of battles and leaders of the Revolution continues therefore to hold its importance and allure. A few of the modern studies in these areas need to be noted. Arthur B. Tourtellot's *William Diamond's Drum: The Beginnings of the War of the American Revolution* (1959) is the best account of Lexington and Concord. Alfred H. Bill's *Valley Forge: The Making of an Army* (1952) treats the battles of Germantown and Monmouth as well as the great winter ordeal of the Continental Army. Rupert Furneaux's *The Battle of Saratoga* (1971), Russell F. Weigley's *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782* (1970), and Harold Larrabee's *Decision at the Chesapeake* (1964) on the Yorktown campaign are all valuable studies. Samuel S. Smith's four books on the battles of Trenton (1965), Princeton (1967), Monmouth (1964), and the Delaware forts (1970) are readable and relate the events of these battles to present-day landmarks. Jack M. Sosin's *The Revolutionary Frontier, 1763-1783* (1967) and Dale Van Every's *A Company of Heroes: The American Frontier 1775-1783* (1962) are modern accounts of the war along the fringes of settlement. Intelligence activities are the central feature of Carl Van Doren's *Secret History of the American Revolution* (1941) which, along with James Flexner's *The Traitor and the Spy* (1953), contains a full account of Benedict Arnold's treason drawn from new sources in British archives. Harold Peterson's *The Book of the Continental Soldier* (1968) is a well illustrated treatment of uniforms, weapons, practices, and customs of the Continental Army. Benjamin Quarles's *The Negro in the American Revolution*

3. Walter Millis, *Arms and Men* (New York: Putnam's, 1956), pp. 34-35.

(1961) treats the role of blacks in winning American independence—a long-neglected subject.

Contributions to American naval history during the Revolution have been made by William Bell Clark in a series of works on various Continental Navy officers and privateers, typical of which is *Ben Franklin's Privateers* (1956), and by William J. Morgan in *Captains to the Northward: The New England Captains in the Continental Navy* (1959). Good short treatments of the British Navy during the Revolution are to be found in the two works mentioned earlier, Lewis's *Navy of Britain* and Gerald Graham's *Empire of the North Atlantic*. As a reference on the naval vessels, tactics, weapons, and crews, see Jack Coggins's *Ships and Seamen of the American Revolution* (1969). The Naval History Division is engaged in a massive project of editing and publishing *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* (1964-); the seven volumes completed at the end of 1976 cover the period 1774-77.

The prosaic field of logistics has in the past attracted few writers, though logistics were of transcendent importance in determining the outcome of the conflict, as Eric Robson noted in his essays. Supporting Robson's view of the role of logistics in British defeat are two recent studies on British supply and transport problems, David Syrett's *Shipping in the American War, 1775-1783* (1970) and R. Arthur Bowler's *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America* (1975). There have been no comparable analyses of American logistics. The student must rely primarily on articles and chapters in broader works such as Huston's *Sinews of War* and Risch's *Quartermaster Support of the Army*. Victor L. Johnson's *The Administration of the American Commissariat During the Revolutionary War* (1941) covers a specialized area. A comprehensive treatment of finances, certainly the Achilles' heel of the American war effort, is to be found in Elmer J. Ferguson's *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finances, 1776-1790* (1961). A most useful compilation of maps for the student of either logistics or battles is the *Rand McNally Atlas of the American Revolution* (1974, edited by Kenneth Nebenzabel).

Many of the most significant recent works on the Revolution have been biographies of American and British military leaders. On the American side, the laudatory tone of the nineteenth-century biographies and the debunking tone of those of the twenties and thirties have been supplanted by a realistic approach which leaves Washington and his principal lieutenants as heroes but of quite human proportions. Douglas Freeman's

massive eight-volume biography of George Washington devotes three volumes to his role as leader of the Revolution, while James T. Flexner covers this part of his career in one volume, *George Washington in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (1968). The Washington of Freeman and Flexner (and the portrait of the two differs in some respects) is a great leader, but not the marble-like god of the nineteenth century. Few any longer deny that his conduct of the New York campaign, as Charles Francis Adams contended in 1911, left much to be desired or that he made other mistakes in his military conduct of the war. His strength lay more in his character and perseverance in the face of almost insuperable obstacles than in any innate military genius. A dissident on this score, however, is Dave R. Palmer, who in *The Way of the Fox: American Strategy in the War for America* (1975) paints Washington as a consummate strategist whose moves in each of four phases of the war were carefully calculated to produce American victory. For those who may wish an iconoclastic view of the great man, see Bernhard Knollenberg's *Washington and the Revolution* (1940), which poses some interesting questions about such key episodes as the court-martial of Charles Lee and the alleged Conway cabal.

Theodore Thayer's *Nathanael Greene: Strategist of the Revolution* (1960) paints Greene as the best of the military minds among Washington's subordinates and in so doing presents an account of the southern campaign. North Callahan's *Henry Knox: George Washington's General* portrays sympathetically another of the Commander-in-Chief's principal assistants. Two biographies of Daniel Morgan appeared at roughly the same time, Don Higginbotham's *Daniel Morgan, Revolutionary Rifleman* (1961) and Callahan's *Daniel Morgan, Ranger of the Revolution* (1961). Willard M. Wallace in *Traitorous Hero: The Life and Fortune of Benedict Arnold* (1954) tells anew the amazing tale of the exploits and eventual apostasy of a most contradictory character. John R. Alden in *General Charles Lee: Traitor or Patriot* (1951) treats another controversial character and exonerates him of anything worse than bad judgment at Monmouth. An older work by a military scholar, John M. Palmer's *General Von Steuben* (1937), is the best on the German pseudobaron who did so much to train the Continental Army. In a trilogy, *Lafayette Comes to America* (1935), *Lafayette Joins the American Army* (1937), and *Lafayette and the Close of the American Revolution* (1942), Louis R. Gottschalk has dispelled much of the myth that has surrounded the young French marquis. Samuel Eliot Morison's *John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography* (1959) is the best as well as the liveliest and most

readable account of the life of the greatest American naval hero of the war.

The treatments of British commanders have generally been less biographies than accounts of their roles in the Revolution. John R. Alden's *General Gage in America* (1948) treats sympathetically the first in the succession of British commanders-in-chief in America. In *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (1972), Ira D. Gruber emphasizes their efforts at conciliation, contending that in this pursuit they sacrificed the "ministry's best prospect for regaining the colonies." William B. Willcox's *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (1964) is of particular significance as a study in the psychology of the British commander who held the position longer than any other during the Revolution and as a treatment of the quarrels and misunderstandings that continually beset the British command in America. If Gruber finds the secret of British failure in 1776-78 in the futile efforts of the Howe Brothers to conciliate rather than to fight, Willcox finds it in 1778-81 in the indecisive character of Sir Henry Clinton and the de facto divided command that cost the British dearly in both north and south. Franklin B. and Mary Wickwire's *Cornwallis, the American Adventure* (1970) portrays with considerable sympathy the character and career of the British general who lost his army at Yorktown, stressing the difficulties he faced and holding Clinton largely responsible for his failure. Gerald Saxon Brown's *The American Secretary: The Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain* (1963) does much to rehabilitate the character of the British cabinet minister whose alleged muddling has generally been held largely responsible for the British disaster at Saratoga. George Martelli has done much the same for the First Lord of the Admiralty in *Jeremy Twitcher: A Life of the Fourth Earl of Sandwich* (1962).

In two volumes, George A. Billias, as editor, has brought together sketches of the major military leaders on both sides, each essay written by a different author. The first volume, *George Washington's Generals* (1964), contains sketches of Washington himself, and of ten of his principal subordinates; the second, *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals of the American Revolution* (1969), has essays on a dozen British generals and admirals. Though the sketches in these volumes vary a great deal in approach and quality, their final effect is clear. They show the American leaders as more energetic and resourceful and call attention again to the ineffectiveness of British leaders and the divided counsels that plagued the development of British strategy. The net impact of

the newer biographies of both English and American leaders is thus not so different from that of the less sophisticated hero-worshipping idylls of the nineteenth century.

The writings of several generations of historians have served to illuminate but not to resolve completely the whys of American victory and British defeat or even the military meaning of the American victory. Tactical innovations were not extensive, but they did represent a culmination of the trend toward employment of light troops as skirmishers that had begun in the French and Indian War. In general Americans tried to adapt to the linear tactics of the British army as the British adapted to the guerrilla tactics of the American forest. At one time American success was ascribed to a superior weapon, the so-called Kentucky rifle, which was far more accurate than the smoothbore musket with which the British, and indeed most Americans, were equipped. Colonel John W. Wright in "The Rifle in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 29 (1924), laid this theory to rest by pointing out that though the rifle was useful in wooded areas it was unsuitable for open-field fighting because of its slow rate of fire and lack of a bayonet. Wright made it clear that the rifle played only a subsidiary role in American victory; it was useful at Saratoga but not at Yorktown.

Walter Millis in *Arms and Men* contends that the real significance of the American Revolution for later military development was not in tactics at all but in the concept, inherent in the thinking of Washington and other leaders, of a national army to which every citizen owed service in war and peace. This concept was but imperfectly realized in the Continental Army and the militia of the American Revolution, but it came to full fruition in the "nation in arms" of the French Revolution.

The Early National Period

In the Uptonian tradition, the period between the Revolution and the end of the War of 1812 is a sort of "Dark Age" in American military history. In that view, the American people, imbued with an unreasoning prejudice against standing armies in time of peace and mindful of government economy, emasculated their military forces. The Continental Army (or the Regular Army as it was to be called after 1788), after practical disbandment in 1783, survived only as a very small force, not very professional at that, largely employed on the frontiers against the Indians. The Navy, which disappeared entirely at the end of the Revolution, was

revived in 1796 during the troubles with revolutionary France but barely survived the Jeffersonian economy drive in the early 1800s. The country came to rely on an unwieldy militia system, inherited from Colonial times, and entered the War of 1812 completely unprepared. The militia proved a weak reed, and American performance in that war was miserably inept.

This "Dark Age" was hardly so dark as the Uptonians would paint it. Whatever may have been the defects in American military institutions, and they were undoubtedly great, the country had singular success in achieving the longer range goals of its foreign policy and in insuring domestic security, the ends military policy normally serves. The new nation established a central government with the powers of taxation and of raising military forces that the Confederation had sadly lacked. The Constitution, in its army, navy, and militia clauses, laid the foundation of American military power. The Indians along the frontier were subdued or pushed westward, opening the area between the Appalachians and the Mississippi to unlimited settlement. The Louisiana Purchase extended American boundaries westward, and military explorers carried the flag to the top of the Rockies and to the Pacific Coast. Internal threats to disrupt the union, such as the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 and the several conspiracies to separate the trans-Appalachian west from the union, were successfully frustrated. One could hardly say the United States *won* the War of 1812 in any literal meaning of that word, yet the end of the war did herald the beginning of American supremacy on the continent. In truth, Americans paid few penalties beyond local defeats for the military inefficiency and ineptitude with which military critics, with some justice, have charged them. The military history of 1783-1815 has its share of ironies.

Works dealing exclusively with military history of the interwar period, 1783-1812, are not numerous. Military affairs of the period have been treated quite extensively in both general military histories of the United States and in general histories of the particular period. Henry Adams's *History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison* in nine volumes (1889-91) is still perhaps the best detailed work for military as well as political and diplomatic history of the 1800-1815 period. The studies of Leonard White on the administrative structure of the federal government, *The Federalists* (1948) and the *Jeffersonians* (1951), are indispensable aids to the study of the military organization and policies during the period. Harry M. Ward's more specialized *The Department of*

War, 1781-1795 (1962) covers military administration in a transition period.

The best work on the early years of the Army in the field, as opposed to departmental administration, is James R. Jacobs's *The Beginnings of the U.S. Army* (1947). Marshall Smelser has done a similar job for the early years of the Navy in *The Congress Founds the Navy* (1959). Jacobs has also provided in *Tarnished Warrior* (1938) a biography of James Wilkinson, the ranking officer of the Regular Army during most of these years, whose devious dealings with the Spanish and in the Burr conspiracy have never yet been completely unraveled.

The most significant work to appear recently on military policy in the post-Revolutionary period, however, is Richard H. Kohn's *Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America* (1975). Kohn stresses the importance of the national defense issue in the twenty years after 1783 and shows that it was the Federalists who actually won the day in the battle over the establishment of a national army, although they destroyed their party in the process.

William H. Goetzmann's *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (1959) covers the military expeditions into the territory of the Louisiana Purchase. John Bakeless's *Lewis and Clark, Partners in Discovery* (1947) deals more specifically with the most important of these expeditions. Gardner Allen has provided coverage of naval operations in *Our Naval War With France* (1909) and *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (1905).

One of the few works dealing exclusively with that most important military institution of the period, the militia, is John K. Mahon's *The American Militia: Decade of Decision 1789-1800* (1960), covering a time when the basic militia laws that were to govern to 1903 took shape. Francis Prucha's *The Sword of the Republic: the United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846* (1969) contains a good account of the Harmer, St. Clair, and Wayne expeditions against the Indians, as well as the frontier fighting during the War of 1812. Dale Van Every's *The Ark of Empire, 1784-1803* (1963) and *Final Challenge: The American Frontier 1804-1845* (1964) deal more fully with the militia campaigns as well as those of the regulars against the Indians both north and south. Randolph C. Downes's *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley Until 1795* (1940) treats this period against the background of the earlier conflicts in the area with far greater sympathy for the Indians than most of the military historians show. Leland D. Baldwin's *Whiskey Rebels: The Story of a*

Frontier Uprising (1939) devotes at least some attention to the militia expedition dispatched by President Washington to western Pennsylvania in 1794 to insure compliance with the tax laws—the great precedent for use of federal military force in civil disturbances in this country.

The War of 1812 itself has been the subject of considerably more historical literature than the formative period of the Union, although the war has not attracted as much attention as the Revolution, the Civil War, or the two great world wars of the twentieth century. The best writing on the war as a whole has come since the post-World War II renaissance of interest in military history, but many of the older works are still valuable. Benson J. Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (1868), a companion piece to his similar book on the Revolution, is still quite useful. And the sections from Henry Adams's nine-volume history edited by Harvey A. DeWeerd and reprinted as *The War of 1812* (1944) remains perhaps the best general history, though one must guard against Adams's prejudices against both the British and the Republican administrations. It was Adams who perhaps did most to create the image of bungling and mismanagement in American conduct of the war. The best account of naval operations is Alfred Thayer Mahan's *Sea Power in Its Relation to the War of 1812* (1905), though his emphasis on the importance of heavy ships of the line and a fleet in being can be disputed as the best policy for the Americans. Theodore Roosevelt's *Naval War of 1812* (1882) is generally reliable and more readable than Mahan.

Since World War II there has been a rash of general accounts. Francis F. Beirne's *The War of 1812* (1949) relies heavily on Adams and Lossing, while Glenn Tucker's *Poltroons and Patriots: A Popular Account of the War of 1812* (1954), which emphasizes the blundering, draws equally heavily on contemporary newspapers. J. MacKay Hitsman's *The Incredible War of 1812* (1965) presents a modern Canadian view of the war, and Reginald Horsman in *The War of 1812* (1969) presents a relatively balanced account for both sides. Harry L. Coles's *The War of 1812* (1965), a volume in the Chicago History of American Civilization series, and John K. Mahon's *The War of 1812* (1972) are the best modern accounts and the most profitable reading for the military student.

On particular aspects of the war, Alec R. Gilpin treats the campaigns along the northern front in *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest* (1958); Neil H. Swanson's *The Perilous Fight* (1945) tells of the British inroads in the Chesapeake Bay area in August

and September of 1814 and the seriocomic American flight from the capital city. Charles F. Brooks's *The Siege of New Orleans* (1961) and Wilburt S. Brown's *The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana: A Critical Review of Strategy and Tactics at New Orleans* (1969) supplant older accounts of the last battle of the war and the only one that produced a decisive American victory (though fought after the signing of the treaty of peace). As usual, biographies contain some of the most useful treatments of events of the war. Among those of importance are Marquis James's *Andrew Jackson, the Border Captain* (1933), Freeman Cleaves's *Old Tippecanoe: William Henry Harrison* (1939), Charles J. Dutton's *Oliver Hazard Perry* (1935), Charles W. Elliot's *Winfield Scott, the Soldier and the Man* (1937), and Glenn Tucker's *Tecumseh: Vision of Glory* (1956).

What conclusions emerge from modern historical scholarship with regard to the War of 1812? The conflict was once called the Second War of American Independence, and this is not entirely unjustified. It is not, as early American historians assumed, that the British were trying to reverse the verdict of 1783 and reconquer the United States. The British accepted the independence of the United States and sought only to limit the nation's growth and influence. But the war did mark the end of dependence on the European system and the beginning of an era when the country could turn toward its own internal development and expansion on a continent where it was clearly dominant. Even if this development was mainly a result of the European peace that followed the exhaustive wars of the Napoleonic era, it still was a most significant one. As Harry Coles remarks, "From the Revolution onward a basic aim of American statesmen had been to achieve freedom of action so that the United States could choose peace or war as its interest might dictate. With the settlement of 1815 this aim became a reality to a degree that the early statesmen had hardly dared to hope."[4]

This success was achieved despite much ineptitude and blundering in the American conduct of the war, particularly in the first year, and the United States did not win in the military sense. The Peace of Ghent (1815) was essentially our first peace without victory. But Britain did not win the war either, and the issues like impressment of seamen, over which it supposedly was fought, simply disappeared with the peace in Europe. During the first two years, while the Americans were most inept,

4. Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 270-71.

Britain had to devote her greatest efforts to the campaigns against Napoleon in Europe and treated the war in America as a sideshow. With Napoleon's exile to Elba in 1814, the British could make a more serious effort in North America, but the Americans had found new and effective military leaders in such men as Jacob Brown, Winfield Scott, and Andrew Jackson. British goals were still limited, and Britain had the same disadvantages to overcome in terms of terrain and geography as in the Revolution. And although the central government in Washington exercised its power weakly and many Americans opposed the war with England, the United States was now a populous and strong country with a going central government and no Tories.

Perhaps victory was impossible for either side for reasons quite apart from the virtues of men or military systems. Harry Coles put it this way:

> The answer seems to be that both sides were attempting to carry out operations that were simply beyond the technical means of the day. In Canada to a degree, and much more so in the United States, there was much brute strength but nowhere did there exist either the public or private means to organize resources and bring them to bear in an effective war effort.

Or, as Reginald Horsman puts it, "Throughout the war neither power was able to solve the problems of offensive warfare on the North American continent, and defence predominated."[5]

This verdict hardly conforms to that of critics who found in the War of 1812 a failure that was the direct result of a faulty military policy—reliance on the militia. There can be little question that the militia failed on many occasions, and above all it was a most imperfect instrument for offensive operations against Florida and Canada. Since the British did not really attempt to subjugate the country in the War of 1812, the rising of the militia in local areas for defense of their homes had not the same effect it had in the Revolution. Nor was the militia needed to maintain control over the countryside, for there was no British "fifth column" such as the Tories had represented during the Revolution. And when we consider the operations of militia in the field, we must admit too that the results were not entirely negative. Regular forces were defeated and humiliated in the early stages of the war just as militia were, and militia performed well, just as they had in the Revolution, under certain

5. Coles, *War of 1812*, pp. 258–59. Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1969), p. 265.

circumstances. Maryland militia did well in the defense of Baltimore in 1814 (in contrast to the performance in the defense of Washington at Bladensburg in the same year), Kentucky volunteers did well at the Thames, and some militia units were among the victors in Jackson's lines at New Orleans.

Yet, on balance, there can be no question that the old militia system did prove ill suited for fighting the kind of war waged between 1812 and 1815, and Americans tacitly recognized it. After 1815 the old militia system fell into decay, to be replaced by volunteers of two sorts: those who trained in special companies in peacetime and were eventually known as the National Guard, and volunteers who enlisted in wartime in state units for specific periods of time. Volunteers rather than militia were to be the principal American reliance in the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the Spanish American War. But volunteers of this sort were nothing new—they had been used in the colonial period for many expeditions, and the Continental Army was, of course, composed of them. On the emergence of the volunteer spirit as the core of the American military system see Marcus Cunliffe's *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (1968).

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